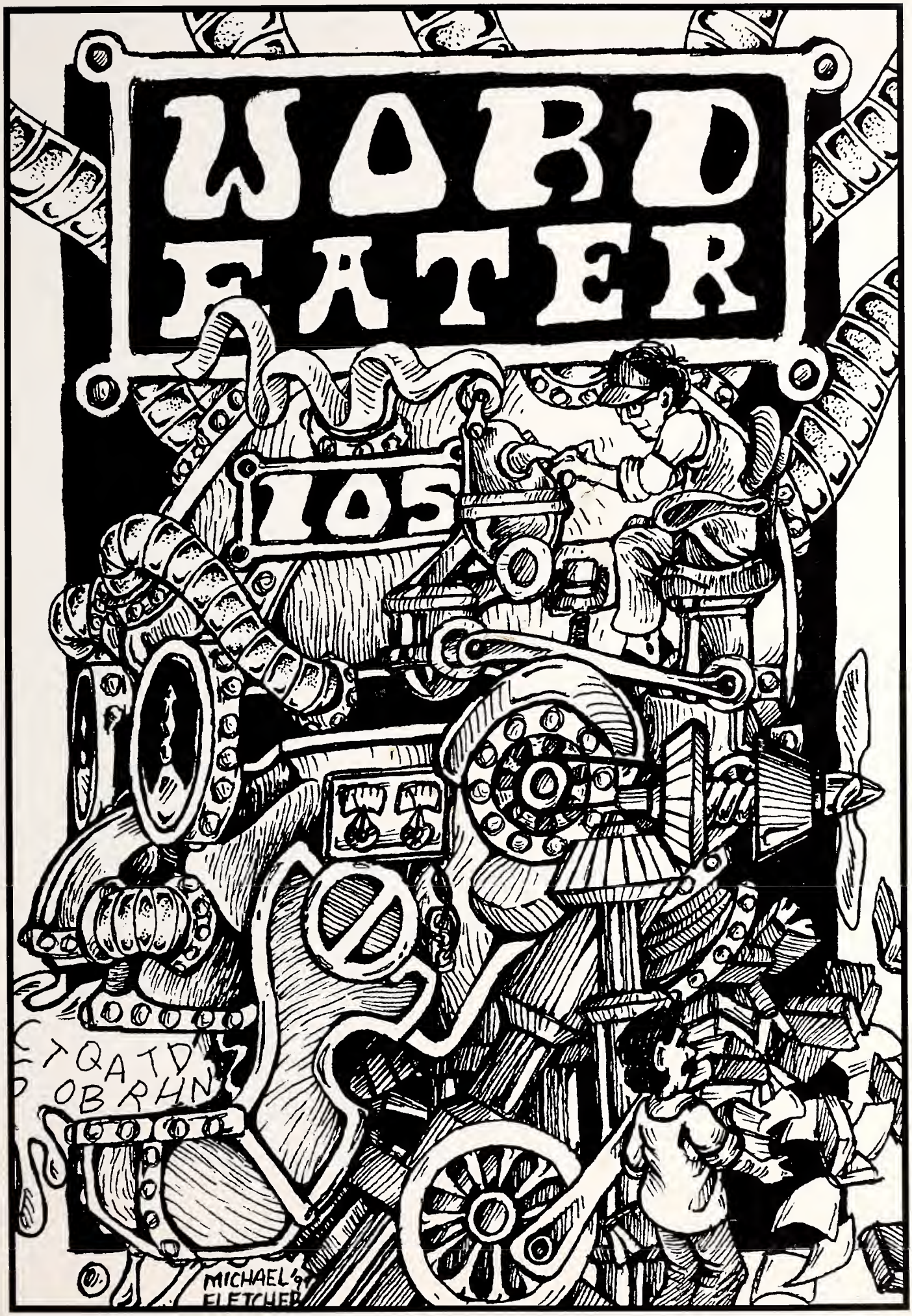
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And Eye Was Nine
Regan Bielby

Flashback to Before; when eye was eight.
It's late, and I'm Looking
through the rear window
of the old blue van
at the big old house
(The one with the large green shutters)
take one last glance at the house
and at the too-small u-haul
trailing in back of the van.

And ; Flashback to Before;
when eye was seven.

It is Christmas in that house,
it is late, and I'm Looking
across the room at
the hushed argument
I'm not supposed to see,
while me and my sister
(pretending not to notice)
play hand-slapping games
at the bottom of the staircase
eating salty tortilla chips and salsa
that sting my chapped lips.

and ; Flashback to Before;
when eye was six.

it's late and I'm Looking
at the neon-green glow
of the alarm clock.
(because i cannot read it yet)
i'm wondering what time it is
as my sister and i hold hands
'cross the gap between our two twin beds,
wondering when the yelling will stop
and We Can Go To Sleep.

Watersheds
Ken Biggs

Camelot was a deceitful dream
shattered aside a green mound
in the fall of my youth
where the blood of a nation
was spilled on the streets
and hemorrhages to this day
~
soon puberty passed
and a power struggle
of ideologies and land
sent the nation off to war again
spending its youth
like pennies from a fat old jar
and the nightmares nag at us still
~
returned. . .
to a fallen King
the pieces all too scattered
I watched the flames
crumple in rage
as a people rose from ashes
to claim garnishment
of all too long overdue
legitimacy and self-determination
~
later. . .
a leader with fools for followers
denied and lied
till almost tried
before backing out the door
pardoned by a jester
who stood mute
while a land I bled for
was raped, crushed,
and swept into obscurity
~
Now at Armageddon's door
divided interests pitted in nightmarish

plots
of selfish suicidal grandeur
where fetal evangelists
and 'mein comf' mentalities
swarm over reason recklessly
to foster ideals as lost as those who profess
them
in abandoned insanities as stained
as the flags they wave in our face. . .

passion reigns
Ken Biggs

sweet is the subtle dawn
filled with damp amber whispers
and dancing fingers of light
enticing the florid forest green
boughs stretched and yearning
wind pants past leaves
coaxing limbs gently
easing between gingerly
as a blissful sway begins
the trunk laments in undulating sighs
wetness oozing from parted branches
leaves cling tightly to quivering twigs
immersed fury unleashed
swelling with guttural abandon
the thunder's crash released
and wetness gushes in quavering waves
suspended in a shuddered flash
earth and sky collapse in a drizzle
tempest spent and contented
as darkness ebbs
surrendered in a vaporous glow
the forest songs echo back slowly
composed in the fragile mist
wind off to fancy in puffy snores
tree submerge

the water's edge
Ken Biggs

I fell into the sea
and the waters swallowed me
memories spiraled in a caldron of faces
cradled in Neptune's forceful embraces
yesterdays flickered in a placid gaze
in surrendered descent
a whirlpool of azure light,
warm and calling my name
as
an aria echoes to the ocean floor
tugging my spirit
through a passage
of golden lace
where tomorrow stands
at a gilded door
~~

beloved

Ken Biggs

Love,
but a settee
until we met. . .
now it's your face
sketched across eyelids,
with each night's surrender;
dawn's petal'd rainbows,
a steamy wet scent,
engorging my thoughts
beyond the pandemic shores
of any earthly ocean;
a vessel of balmy contentment,
as the wind whispers
your name softly,
and my breast
boldly echoes. . .
I love you!
I love you!
I love you evermore. . .
~~

SUMMARY OF CREATIVE WRITING CLASS

Sally Biggs

One of the most important lessons acquired from this class in creative writing is the best way to learn is to write. There is no other alternative. Just as the text explained, getting started is the most difficult part. I've spent countless hours thinking about how and what to write. I think writing forces a person to make full use of mental capabilities. My own are rather rusty, and I think the class helped shake at least some of that off.

I think one of the most striking aspects of the class is a new awareness and appreciation for words. I've noted beautifully written phrases in books, but never paid much attention to the importance of structure, description, and use of words. I have a better understanding of words that appeal to the senses and how when carefully chosen, they can make the difference between a good and not-so-good work. New and used words is another concept I had never thought much about, but does make a difference in creating a work that's fresh. Repetition of words is a habit that I've found most difficult to change. It's second nature to use words that you've grown partial to and utilize most often. They're like old friends that are hard to put aside for new ones.

Reading has always been a constant in my life, but this class has humbled me with the realization that I haven't been selective enough in my reading. My horizons have been limited due to choices of reading material. There's a whole new world of reading experiences that I hope to take advantage of. I'll never read in the same manner I did before taking this class.

My admiration for writers has grown from my own writing attempts. I have a better understanding of the time and effort required in the creation of their art form. I've had great difficulty in writing even a few pages and writers manage entire books with hundreds of pages. It amazes me that someone can have enough imagination to accomplish such a feat. Thank goodness for their creativeness because my life would be barren without books.

I think the class was very helpful in that all

three genres were studied in the text book. Their interrelation was defined with examples by both Minot and our instructor. The opportunity to study all three forms gave freedom of choice for the writing assignments. I think if you want to be creative it's important that you do have choices.

One of the benefits of the class was the sharing of classmates' work. Analyzing and reading someone else's work helped me to perceive errors made in my own writing. Feedback from classmates was a definite aid in several ways. Opinions varied on the overall view of the work and useful suggestions were given for improvement. I think my classmates' work showed improvement and progression. Their writing reflected the use of lesson material absorbed from the class.

Creating characters was one of the most interesting learning experiences of the class. In writing you are able to "give birth" to a character and create a person of your own choosing. The writer has unlimited opportunities as to what this new person will be like in both personality and physical features. Creativity can be very exciting.

Grammar is a large part of a writer's tools and I certainly need new ones. I became aware that poor use of grammar can frustrate readers and clog up a writer's work.

I think the text covered the important principles in creative writing including what should and shouldn't be done. Stephen Minot was very thorough in covering all phases of writing. He made the point that to be a writer you need to write and write some more, and also the importance of doing large amounts of reading as well.

On a personal level I absorbed and learned more from the instructor at the front of the class than from Minot. The use of humor and clear, understandable explanations made for a better learning process. I enjoyed the class and appreciate the teacher's care and effort.

Twin

Melinda Cardona

Half missing, half gone.
Never met, never knew.
But felt the-
Emptiness, inside going
Wild
With
Bewilderment-
Frustration-
Confusion-
Grief-
Loss-
You were taken
Before I knew,
And still I felt
The missing you.
Now I believe,
You are here,
Guardian Angel,
God bless you.

Part Me, Part You
Melinda Cardona

I feel your presence
It's all around me.
It revives me
All inside of me.

I believe in you and everything you are.
You're part of me, yet so much more.
You opened my eyes
In a way for me to see
A life I hadn't before,
Your beauty and light of life.

I will follow forever
Till my last breath,
Even when the darkness comes
Then still after
As long as I must.

I am so moved by your words,
You speak through others,
I lose myself, cry.

You make me stronger
Though I am so weak.

With the presence of your love
Anything is possible.

I want to live for you
As you did for me.

My mornings are easier
Waking with you in my life.
Knowing you will be there
To guide me right.

Music to Me
Melinda Cardona

soft hard strong bellowing tapping
moving curling spinning loud
humming
buzzing
bass
base
chirp
induce
seduce
enigma communicating
feeling it inside and out strange
impel sway transforming mystifying
wild dipping grooving whispering enchant
deafening clearing sexy relaxing touch blowing
feeling wanting melody screaming drum sucking
guitar oboe trumpet slightly whistle saxophone
piano flute intense echoing mystify strangeness
full exciting breath - taking hot cold inviting
inside outside drifting mute saddening
creative happy joyous clamorous
together lovingly lovely

Lost Eyes
Bryan Croxen

New tension
Loss of Sight
No sanctuary
No answer

Possibilities not found
Nowhere to turn
go into the hole
Maybe better there
Too Phony
Everyone's crazy
A lot of groups
So much conformity
Noisy and Loud
Kills the Inside
can't reach the peak
not strong enough
no more peace
no more harmony
Get up and run
Far away
Don't turn back
Leave

In Memory of Allen Ginsberg

Crystal Duran

ALLEN, I wanted to make you love beads
I wanted to shake the hand
of the God of all Lyricism
RAW in its purest substance
Hovering words now float over my head
in visions of bongo drums
I'm weighed down upon
with excruciating heaviness
That presses itself against the viking runes
and wiccan talismans on my breasts
Dancing in the rain with flowers in your hair,
you walked naked in America's streets
PROTESTING
"NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT!"
As you witnessed a generation
in languid extinction
A generation of hysterically naked
and starving minds go mad.
Allen, I wanted to stand in front of you naked,
with nothing but my beads on
reciting "HOWL"
And drinking some mad java, man
I wanted to frolic insatiate in the jungles
in Tangier and bomb congress
I wanted to crush those absolutist jesus
fanatics with my teeth
WITH YOUR EYES OF RUSSIA
Heartbreaking, sounds like glass Allen
...like thunder in my cerebellum
Your HOWLS trip in my brains,
your breath clouds me,
sends me falling into
ORGASMS of pure lyrical pleasure
...what now? An institution
of corruption, now stands
erect and attentive.
And relishes in your extinctions
...I plummet into an epidemic
of disintegration... all that
I was once expired...but the hand and pen
work without me now...
The words blur and bleed together
as my mind has gotten more and more
Clinically depressed...I can't feel
...I Can't see the colors of the rainbow...
I FAIL to see the kaleidoscopic pictures
on the walls...
Oh, ALLEN, your words soothe
my swollen sockets, fatigued
from looking into in

They copulate like snakes ferociously
...needy...thirsty...ravenous...
I stand up and shout your echoing name
through the hills to the Mesa
in Mexico...I see you
Dancing with medicine men on top
of Mountains with feathers and bongos,
peace pipe smoking all
Your angst away...Crazily elated,
mad lifted...Freeze Framed in time
...I see you
Into the heavens, still searching
for AYAHUASCA, perhaps?
I'll smoke some tonight in hopes
of resurrecting you...I hear the
eery enchantment
Of the entrancing CHANTING
of the indian men...they form a circle
...in front of you
Throwing blood, yage and semen
into the rising hungry flames
...WE RESURRECT YOU
I slip now into EPILEPTIC SEIZURES
and highly choreographed convulsions
I entwine and twist madly
...with your loss...and the emptiness
...the complete zero.
So long and without an end
...to all this evolution...
The growling thunder climaxes,
hypnotic, euphoric, like the
Cicadas buzz and buzz

Government Cheese and the 80's Saga of Immigrants

Crystal Duran

Free government cheese in churches as a kid, I used to run in greasy junkyard painted clothing. My dad and I loved them. I stole shiny hood ornaments because they reminded me of Juanita's fillings. Placed them in my pockets, lacy dressed. I laughed. Palms oily black the rose flesh underneath. Migrant workers somewhere else crisping in the sun. 10 cents a basket of grapes, a basket of strawberries. Mom is working in a wire factory, rainbow wires wound around her fingertips. Immigration lurking like sibling foot odor. Mommy poked her eyes out on wire. Eye-patch white for her eye, Mosquito while wearing 3-D glasses watching JAWS in movie theater out one eye. Yellow floods my chair, the floor, Headstart, I was 5. A smart girl. Dad (dirty) smells like chemicals hard hat on, mustached, utility belt. Leather. Smiling. I was embarrassed he had to pick me up from school. Dimples in cheek, ruffled with lacy straps. I waved good-bye to ugly school bus, bye, don't wanna go to school today, I wanna see my mommy. Goldfish by the window screen looking out, a string of relief he leaves thru clear water. Later goldfish explodes, too much food. Large wire cable spools we used them as chairs and mini-tables, as desks. Put t.v. on one. Old blue typewrite, I used to write, the Larousse sat next to me, my companion. The 80's were languid. Brown faux wood paneling surrounds us. The smell of pancakes and steak and chile I inhale. Time for breakfast. Beer on table, mom at stove. I sit in the plastic yellow and orange upholstered thrift chairs, wire back is cold against my dark skin. Plastic colored magnets on refrigerator I arrange to say mom and dad I

love you, cool. Grandma tells me not to get too close to Dad, he's a man. My dad is nice, good. She thinks daddies are evil. She's evil. She thinks I'm crazy now that I'm 19, I wonder why!!! Funny rainbow colored paper we used to buy foods at grocery stores. My mom is ashamed at the funny paper, but proud. My mom and dad work. I'm sometimes lonely, I do my homework and read Spanish books. The goldfish smiles at me always.

Malevolent

Erica Gallagher (Alumni)

Pain in my right arm
Pain in my left
The best part of being me
Is that I haven't met you yet
The best part of being here
Is that you are over there
And when I lift my wrist to look at the time
The truth is that I don't care
Because time is just for madmen
And madwomen who think the clock
Will save them from the evil world
When the world is just a dirty rock
The coolest thing about being this
Is the fact that I'm not that
The nicest thing about being round
Is knowing the world is flat.

My Stories, Ideas

Erica Gallagher (Alumni)

I have an idea
I have a million stories
And they have asked too much of me
And you don't want to hear them
And you don't really care
About my ideas,
My stories
Or me.

So I will tell my stories
And I will share my ideas
With someone else
And then another
And they will listen, because they care
Unlike you,
You suck.

Butter

Erica Gallagher (Alumni)

When I slipped like butter on linoleum
Beyond the island of logic
And into the wild sea of sex
I caught myself scared as hell
I found myself wanting a safe place
To lie down and dream myself
    out of the trouble.

Unique is Dead
Erica Gallagher (Alumni)

Independence is a knife
Stabbing its way to your life
Liberty is a gift and a curse
So to know this is worse
As you begin to see
You're a slave to being free.

The Making of a Mistake
Erica Gallagher (Alumni)

One must be careful
    before making a mistake
The mood must be right
And the situation should be set
    in a proper fashion
If one overlooks the slightest thing
The mistake won't work.

See, I know this because
    I've made numerous mistakes
It takes a lot of effort and desire-
I took into consideration
    all the likely scenarios
In my enormous span of thought
And made every mistake in perfect stride.

Baseball Diaries
Erica Gallagher (Alumni)

Yesterday he gripped the leather sphere
Almost as if he was attempting
    to suffocate it
Life it was his worst enemy
    ...and then he pitched it
No, he didn't pitch it-
    he wound his thick arm behind his back
And he released the helpless ball
Releasing it so nimbly, it became
    an intangible weapon.
So when it neared the others instrument,
    where his clenched fists
Wrapped around the heavy aluminum neck,
It swung and struck the white sphere
    with such intensity
I believe it lost its circular shape
    for a second-
It went straight ahead without any hindrance;
    it was a straight white line
Like a shooting comet, it lost no
    momentum as it flew
The day was mild, no wind
And all the others lifted their heads up
    in the stillness of it all
In the enchantment of it all-
Until their eyes lost it.

Exaggerating

Jennifer Gebhardt

Bits
and
Pieces
floating among
the vast resources

ever present

unfond memories

unknown uncontrolled

inexplicable

placed in a dark corner
of the mind

to sit and brood over

years later
in the

asylum

abnormalities

breaking glasses
shattering dreams

periwinkle
blue

a color that
whispers

look at me

I'm not periwinkle
Or see
Through

I SCREAM
OUT
LOOK AT ME!

Maybe I am
Electric
Blue

Sitting in a hot tub
Writing by candlelight
all alone
with only your
thoughts and a
pen to
accompany

jets whirling
the bubbles caress
your near nakedness

thoughts of who might
be nice to share
this moment with
are over all to soon

and sinking lower
drowning alone
in my near naked
state
by my own inhibitions

Big Daddy's Back
Ann Marie Girard

Slip, slide
Giggle and glide
The big daddy's back
Dressed in white and black
Making each move
A gentle groove
With the bebop beat
A tantalizing treat
To years of old
Art Deco leaves cold-
As cold as ice
But, with a roll of the dice
Changes the tide
The exhilarating ride
Thrills my being
What am I seeing?
Everything's free-wheeling
This hip-cat feeling
Isn't a fling
Just LET IT SWING!

Untitled
Michael S. Hensley

The bright dappled leaves dance
merrily before me eyes.
The wind plays the reed's song,
full of grace, solidity, and strength
A gaily dressed hummingbird
sputters in the morning breeze-
Even though the sun shall still
shine on the morrow's sky-
all is not fine, life is not right
A circle once full, happy and light,
now sundered - with only
the echoes to continue
a now distant dance.

As I look around
a stalwart pair still stand
all but the shadows have fled.
What was lost can now
never be found - like the
broken string on a violin.

The Swing
Margaret Howells

A canvas swing is everything
its perpetual motion helps me dream.
Closing my eyes, I set sights high
searching for reserves hidden deep inside.
Perseverance is what I need
encouragement to succeed.
Relaxation creates stimulation
and then creativity grows.
I do not know what I will produce
when these juices flow.

Rainfall

Margaret Howells

Cocooned inside the environment of a comforting room, senses sharpened to the deepening gloom.

Piercing-sweet mountain air broken by the rhythmic sound of water, coursing its way to the valley.

Guided by an aged, well-worn path, a tumultuous waterfall surmounts boulders of weathered granite and crashes onto the rocks below.

The resultant spray feeds lichened and mossy crevices, while providing a tenuous lifeline to the exposed roots of a sparse fir tree.

A constant air of expectancy and surprise is only interrupted by the noise, or sight, of wildlife.

Restless birds chatter warning of impending intruders; the remaining minuscule creatures seek shelter in cave, burrow or under a blade of grass.

Rustling leaves and swaying grasses are music to the ear, while a wealth of wildflowers decorating the landscape please the eye.

Tranquility abounds in the soothing rhythms of nature - gentle breezes whispering in the trees; varied cadences of running water; shadows made by the sun hiding as its transit across the sky is broken by an infinite variety of clouds.

Man is reminded of the duration of his lifespan as he surveys scenery which nature's hand has taken centuries to forge.

The belief that he commands strength and power in his everyday surroundings is shaken by his exposure to the magnitude of nature: he is humbled as he experiences an adjustment in the perspective of his self-importance.

Undercurrents

Margaret Howells

Liz awoke tense. She held her breath. Eyes now wide open in the dark bedroom, she waited, straining her ears for any abnormal sound. She released her breath slowly, still listening intently. Just as she was beginning to breathe freely again, relax and think about turning over to go back to sleep, there was a dull thud downstairs.

Tom's snoring was consistent as Liz slipped out from under the covers. No one would enter her house, or dare to come anywhere near her children! A rush of adrenalin emboldened her and she picked up a heavy brass elephant. It had been one of those "not really useful until now" Christmas gifts which on many occasions Liz had considered giving away, but never did because she had a vague recollection of being told that elephants brought good luck.

Liz hurried to Amy's room. The floorboards creaked ominously in response to her rapid movements. Undeterred by the fact that the intruder may hear her, she opened the door and peered inside. Her eyes now accustomed to the gloom, she could discern Amy's shape under the covers and hear gentle breathing.

Satisfied that Amy was okay, she moved toward Danny's room which was at the head of the stairs. An assortment of muffled sounds rose from the dense blackness below. A shiver ran down Liz's spine, as the reality of her rash behavior heightened her awareness to the danger in which she was placing herself. She opened the door, and immediately came face to face with Danny. Frantically signaling for him to be quiet, by pressing a finger to her lips, she gestured him back into the room and mouthed that he should stay there until she came back. Danny was reluctant but obeyed his mother.

The noise of closing his door seemed immense considering how many times she had done this before in the dead of night, but her finely tuned senses were exaggerating everything at this time.

Sarah's door handle squeaked as Liz turned it, and as she entered the room she had the eery sensation that she was not alone. She knew her nerves were on edge: her heart was pounding so much her chest was thumping, and she could hear the noise in her ears. Instinctively she knew there was someone behind her. Her blood ran cold and she instantly froze as every nerve and muscle in her body was consumed by fear. Slowly lifting the elephant, she was about to turn around when she felt the agonizing pain of a hard object on the back of her head.

It was the crash of Liz's body falling onto the floor which woke Sarah, who screamed as she saw the shape of a dark figure bending over her mother. The figure, startled by the noise, looked up immediately, turned and ran. Sarah heard footfalls on the stairs, followed by the slamming of the front door. She clambered out of bed and ran to help her mother, rapidly followed by Danny running out of his room into hers to see what had happened.

"Mom, Mom - wake up, please!" Sarah begged, sick with fear at the sight of her mother's motionless body.

"Danny, go get Dad."

"What the..." Tom's groggy voice began to bear signs of irritation at Danny's insistent shaking and calling of his name.

"Slow down, Danny. Now, what's wrong?" he asked with increasing concern as his senses alerted him to an unusual situation.

"Quick, Dad, it's Mom. She's been hurt. Someone was in the house!" Danny gasped trying to inform Tom of everything all at once.

Tom was visibly shaken at the sight of Liz.

"Liz, Liz." He shook her gently.

"I've tried that, Dad," Sarah sobbed, "but she won't wake up."

"Call an ambulance, Danny." instructed Tom. "Then the police. Sarah, look in the medicine cabinet and bring me some smelling salts."

Left alone with Liz, Tom picked up her hand and pressed it to his cheek.

Sirens could be heard in the distance gradually getting louder; not one but two.

Then the house was awash with people. The police were questioning Danny and Sarah, the ambulance crew looking at Liz, deciding to take her to the hospital, and Major's concerned owners, the Miller's who had come over because of all the noise he had been making when the police and the ambulance vehicles arrived.

Mrs. Miller assured Tom that she would stay with the children until he returned. "You're not to worry about anything. They'll be fine." she said as she ushered them toward the kitchen to give them milk and cookies.

Tom seemed unaware of the chaos and would not leave Liz's side. He followed the stretcher as if glued to it, talking to her coaxing her to open her eyes as the sad procession made its way to the ambulance.

Liz's weekend had begun in much the same way as any number which had passed before. In the small but comfortable suburban ranch, dishes clinked as she placed them in the draining rack and wiped the back of her hand across her forehead to straighten a strand of hair. How many times a day do I do this, she wondered; how many times a week, a month, a year?

"Mom," the pleading voice of Danny, the eldest of her three children, broke into her thoughts, "I can't sleep, can I have a drink?"

"Okay, sweetheart, it's warm tonight, isn't it? Here, have some juice."

She poured a large glass with lots of ice and led Danny back to his room. More dirty dishes, she thought; if anyone should ask her what she did with her life she would have to tell them "I look after dishes." The mental image of her talking this statement momentarily lifted her spirits, simply because of its sheer absurdity. Where other women became politicians, owned businesses, were artists, sculptors, doctors, Liz was a dishwasher. What were their lives like, Liz wondered. For just one day she'd like to see.

She closed Danny's door and the stairs squeaked as she returned to the kitchen. After she pulled two chairs away from the table, her tired body molded itself onto one as she rested her legs on the other. The familiar hum of the refrigerator and ticking of the clock in the living room comforted her.

A barking dog woke Liz. Major was really upset, intermittently barking, growling and snarling as he raced back and forth on the other side of the fence, desperate to reach the agitation.

"Quiet, Major! Save yourself for a real burglar." An angry voice slurred the words.

Liz's muscles tensed as she listened for Tom's steps. She sighed deeply. Friday nights were always the same: Tom got paid; Tom got drunk. There would be precious little cash left for her to buy the week's groceries. The screen door banged shut and the heavy thud of workboots crossed the floor behind her.

"Why are you in here - sitting?" His voice was thick and faltering.

"I sat down pooped and must've fallen asleep. Major just woke me."

"Tired? Why are you tired? From staying home all day?"

Liz knew that Tom was very drunk: not just because his words were slurred and he was unsteady on his feet, but because he was antagonistic. "I'm tired." he said. "I've been at work all day while you sleep." He said contemptuously.

Liz was silent. She flinched and held her breath as Tom, staggering, moved close until she could smell the beer on his breath. He stood a moment, swaying. She slowly exhaled as he passed her by and went into the living room. Disjointed segments of sound assaulted her ears as he channel-surfed for something to watch on television, although through experience she knew it would not be long before he fell asleep.

Nothing would persuade Liz to go into the living room to spend the remaining part of the evening in Tom's company. She made a comforting cup of hot chocolate and searched for something to read. Liz did not want a magazine as she had no wish to review the normal lives of others, nor learn how she should make herself attractive, beautify her home, or seek advice on how to mend a broken marriage. Despondent when her search proved fruitless, she finished her chocolate and checked the children before going to bed. Although she was tired, Liz had a premonition that sleep would be elusive. The night was oppressive with heat and humidity. Subsequently it would be determined that the summer of 1976 broke previous records for severe heat and drought conditions.

"Amy, hurry, or we will be late." Liz cajoled her youngest.

While tossing and turning the previous night, Liz had decided to take the family to the zoo. She could not remember the last time they had been out somewhere interesting, and she knew the children would enjoy it - of course, if they could ever get out of the house.

"Mom, I can't find my Barbie." Amy

whined. She would not leave the house without it.

"Get Sarah to help you, Amy. I must finish lunch." She desperately tried to pack some sandwiches.

Finally on their way, Liz challenged everyone to a game of "I Spy" as the car passed through unfamiliar territory. The time passed quickly, and they were soon pulling into a parking lot.

"Danny! Stay close now." Liz kept them together as they passed through the turnstile and decided what to visit. Their excitement was infectious and Liz felt her mood elevate. Getting out was such a great idea. Saturday could have passed in the usual way - the children playing with their friends, or just watching television - but this was much more fun.

Visits to the reptile house, primates, monkeys and petting zoo complete, Liz told the children that they should be going home.

"Ugh, Mom, just a little longer...please?" begged Amy. "Let's see the monkeys again, they're so funny."

"I like the hippos and crocodiles." Danny said.

"I know. We would all like to see everything again, but it won't be today. We have to get home before it gets late. Dad may come home at any time. He may be there already wondering where we are."

The journey home was filled with everyone imagining what life must be like in countries such as Africa, which was prompted by sight of lions, tigers and hyenas. Danny said that he wanted to work with animals when he was older and Liz smiled, wondering what in fact he would really do when that time came. Sarah was excitedly talking about the bears and pandas. She said they looked cuddly and lovable. Amy had not forgotten the monkeys; it seemed they had made a big impression on her with their playful antics.

Liz turned off the ignition. Even before the engine died her spirits sank. Tom's truck was parked in the driveway.

"Daddy, we went to the zoo and saw the monkeys." Amy chattered excitedly running through the kitchen.

"Yeah, Dad, you should have seen the hippos and crocodiles - they were awesome!" Danny said. "Mom, can we go over to Ed's?"

"Okay, but don't be late for dinner."

Tom took a beer from the fridge, hastily ripping off the tab and gulping noisily. He went into the living room, drawn by the magnetism of the television, as Liz set the table, heated the already prepared spaghetti sauce, and baked the garlic bread.

Dinner time was livelier than usual, the children were still talking zoo-related topics, such as: Where does all the food come from? What does it take to be a zoo keeper? Do animals like living in cages? Liz relaxed and reprimanded herself for being a pessimist. Danny was listening to Tom as he described "the one that got away" and Liz imagined that this scene must be the same as in many other homes at meal times.

"Was it this big?" Danny asked widening the space between his palms. As he gestured, his right hand caught the top of his glass of Coke. Everyone watch with dread and horror, sensing a catastrophe but totally unable to stop it, seemingly in slow motion the glass tipped over, landing on the rim of Tom's plate where, unceremoniously, its frigid, dark contents were spilled over his dinner. The warm kitchen froze with foreboding.

"Dammit!" Tom roared. "What a klutz! You've ruined my food!"

Sarah and Amy looked away from their father. Their eyes met their mother's. Liz's look warned them not to say a word in Danny's defense. All they could do was hope their father's anger subsided.

Liz quickly removed Tom's sodden plate, supplying him with another so that he could get a second helping of spaghetti, which he ate in studied silence. Meanwhile the children had been excused from the table, and Liz could hear a variety of animal sounds from the yard. It seemed they were now playing.

Liz made a couple of attempts to rekindle the pleasant atmosphere. Tom, however, reverted to his usual boorish behavior and barely grunted in reply. Liz's spirits were dampened. It had been a wonderful, uplifting day. She had forgotten Tom's sensitive equilibrium for a while. She was disheartened. She felt that no sooner did she make some headway in bringing the family together than it was immediately undermined because Tom was drunk or angry, frequently both.

She dreaded the evening which loomed ahead seemingly without end. There would be no respite for her. It would not matter what she said or did tonight, everything would be wrong. The atmosphere would be cold as ice, and it would become a test of will for her to stay with Tom until it was time to go to bed. Tom, she decided, was more of a child than Sarah, Danny or Amy.

"What happened, Liz?" Corey asked.

Liz and Corey had been friends since they had been at school together, and Liz had called her over to spend the evening. Although it had been a month since she came home from the hospital, if Tom was out fishing, or working late, she preferred to have the company of another adult in the house.

"It was a burglar, Corey. It all happened so fast. At first I didn't believe there was anyone here, but as I checked the children I guess he heard me. I think he hit me on the head to give himself time to get away. Perhaps he thought that no one would believe there had been anyone in the house at all, but of course Sarah saw him, and Danny heard him when he ran down the stairs and out the door."

"Do you have any idea who it was?"

"No, and the police haven't a clue. They suspect we were just the unlucky ones on the block."

"That isn't very comforting, is it? Do you think he'll come back?"

"I don't know. I hope not. The police doubt it, but I'm still nervous. Life's funny though, Corey. Would you think having an intruder in the house could improve things between Tom and me?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well," Liz hesitated, "Tom's a changed man."

"Now I know you were hit on the head! Tom, a changed man?"

"Yes, I know it's difficult to believe, but he really is. I can remember that weekend vividly. Tom had been so obnoxious. You know how he was, always getting drunk Friday nights. I was determined the children would have a good day Saturday, so I took them to the zoo. That was great and I know they enjoyed it. I certainly did. It was wonderful to relax, and not have Tom with us to find fault with something, or someone. Of course, though, when we came home the evening was a mess. First of all Danny spilt Coke on his father's dinner so Tom spent the evening watching television, barely grunting in response to anything I said. Then during the night we had the incident with the burglar.

"I couldn't believe it when Tom visited me in the hospital. He was very quiet; he seemed shaken up. Now, it's as though he can't do enough for me. He does the chores that I have always wanted him to do, but of course, I wouldn't ask him before because I knew he would bite my head off. He mows the lawn and takes out the garbage as though its second nature. He still has a drink every Friday, but he doesn't get drunk.

"So something good came of it all, although I could have done without the headache I had for a few days. Looking at Tom's transformation, though, it's a small price to pay, isn't it?" Liz concluded.

Ma

Gina Hughes

She used to listen
She used to understand
She never had to tell me
She loved me
I knew
Now I can't open the door
Without I love you
    Wear your seatbelt
    Be careful
Like I'm never coming home
And when I try to tell
Her something important
She just nods
    Uh-ah
    That's nice
Where has my mother gone

edickinson@1886.com

Nancy Lockhart (Alumni)

If she wrote a letter to the world (wide web),
E-mailed her poetry,
Would her verse be none-the-worse,
I wonder, Emily,

Would recluse's pen in Amherst house
Be more adroit for use of mouse?
Could she capture nuance, turn a phrase,
Alas! If we could only gaze
Like flies on walls up in her loft.
Would she get off on Microsoft?

If funeral in her brain she felt,
Would her iambic die and pentameter melt?
Cause ancient Muses to reject her,
If she had no surge protector?

Sweet Emily, I see your face,
The papered walls, the curtains' lace,
Spellchecking lines for cyberspace.

A certain slant of light does funnel.
Could it be the one at the end
Of the carpel tunnel?

What care you today
If calligraphy be sloppy?
The saving grace is
On your floppy.

Cheer up, dear Emily, it could be worser.
You've learned to scroll and
Move your cursor.

You could not stop for Death. . .
Cough, cough -
So close your file
And just log off!

Gifts

Alicia Matthews

I remember clearly the days following my grandfather's funeral. I was nine-years-old. I don't remember crying; my grandfather had been a stranger to me. My own father hadn't spoken to the man since his eighteenth birthday. The day he moved out. Still, he was my father's father, and with that came obligations. I had been drafted on this hot summer day to help pack up the attic with Aunt Sarah. Sarah Lee was my dad's only sister, and she was a talker. My mom always said she wanted to staple Sarah's mouth shut, if only for a day, and give us all a vacation. Sarah drove everyone nuts. That's probably how I got stuck with her in the attic.

If I said it was a hot summer's day, then it was a furnace in the attic. Not that, that slowed Aunt Sarah down. She kept on packing, talking, sweating, and giving orders, (or 'guidance' as she called it). At one point she 'guided' me over to a corner filled with boxes. I sat. I sweated. I listened to Aunt Sarah rant and rave about dad's siblings, and then about people I'd never heard of. I pulled a dusty shoe box out of one of the boxes. I opened the shoe box. Upon opening it a note floated out of the box. A happy birthday note to Buford. Well, I didn't need gabby Aunt Sarah to tell me where this Bible went. Buford was my dad. This went in the box for him. I walked over to the box set aside for my father. I was about to toss it in when Sarah spotted me.

"What ya got there, kiddo?" I shrugged and held up the Bible. "Oh well, I haven't seen that in years."

I shrunk down to my feet. 'Oh, no.' I thought. 'here we go again, another boring story about . . .' as I thumbed through the Bible I heard her say something that caught my attention. She continued. I sat and listened, continuing to leaf through the Bible as she went. The Bible was a nice one, one of those with the color prints in the middle and the gold-trimmed pages.

"I remember the day your father got that. For a month before his eighteenth birthday your dad hinted on how he wanted some new model shot gun. Being a man now, he'd need one. In the twenty's. Here in West Virginia, every man had some kind of shot gun. But dad said, (now that's my dad, your grandfather,) he said if your dad was going to be a man then what he really needed was the word of the Lord. Those two fought all month long. Now don't get me wrong, they were always at each other's throat. But this was worse. Buford kept on about the gun, and mom kept gently reminding him, bless her soul, that there was no way they could buy him that gun; it was nearly fifty dollars and where would they get the fifty dollars to blow on a birthday. See, kiddo, back then fifty dollars was a fortune. Not like now, the way you kids think money grows on trees. Anyway, where was I? Oh, yes. So the day Buford turned eighteen, well, kiddo, I'll never forget it. Dad handed him that Bible and the note. Well, your dad, got hot, I mean, he was red under the collar. He slammed that Bible down on the table and stormed out the door. I still remember the sound of that screen door swinging against the house, and then slamming back shut. You know I'd never seen my dad cry, 'cept for that day. Well, anyway, they never spoke again."

She went on and on, but I didn't hear her. I was looking at something stuck between the pages. What I had found made me realize that what my mother said of my father was true. He was pig-headed. I knew this to be true because there before me was fifty dollars and an ad for that shot gun. I was part of a male line

that was stubborn. Leaving it between the pages, I shut the Bible. I never mentioned to Aunt Sarah what I had found. In fact, I kept my secret until we were back home. So the day went on with me sweating, and good ole Aunt Sarah gabbing nonstop. When we were back home. I shared my secret, but only with my father. I showed him the Bible and the fifty. He looked at it a long time. Silent. Then he dropped his head into his hands and wept. That was the first time I seen my father cry.

Enrich Your Dream

David McCord

When we were young
We would dream each night.
We experienced all,
From joy to fright.

When we grew older we
Did not dream as much,
But our dreams were richer.
True love and such.

The richness of our dreams
Kept growing with time.
They grew to reach the
Level sublime.

This could be a proof
That knowledge is power.
Intelligence made our dreams
Blossom like a flower.

If we were to keep
Learning it seems
We will eventually
Realize our dreams.

And if we keep
Learning to no end
We will dream of things we
Could, before we comprehend.

Your First Step

David McCord

I remember your first step;
I was filled with pride.
I pictured you walking down
The aisle as a bride.

My sleep was rich with dreams
Of how great you would be.
I saw promise in you
That no one else could see..

You surpassed any dream I had;
You were the perfect child.
You would fill me with warmth
Every time you smiled.

I loved how you would wake me
With what you would say.
Your voice echoed "Bye Dad, Love You,
Have a nice day!"

Now you have left me for
College, and I am proud,
But I miss our mornings when
You would shout out loud.

I still listen for the words
That you no longer say.
It seems, since your first step,
You slowly walked away.

conversing, once

Erin M. McGrath

what is a conversation? darlin
is it two strangers alone
trading words or could it be
the writing
from my mind to my fingers
is it accompanied by a pair of "quotes" or can it be
what some (dramatically, perhaps) would call. . .silence?
does it have to involve hmmmm words?
or can it simply be the look in your eye
during that one song

juiced, for tonight

Erin M. McGrath

fear

smoke in my face you are
dragging my body
over the deadness of the forest

consciousness

pushing my mouth against the
decay
within you
holding fast to my waist

evening

the moisture on your lips
from fervent breath
your hand creeps down

blood

"tight now baby, this ain't no dream"

one night, only

Erin M. McGrath

kneeling
beside him
(glimpse of late fall through
the window)
defeated

she shudders at the thought
of needing him
"i can't do this"
hands tremble to touch him—this
illusion—
praying for her coldness to prevail
"i can't do this to myself"
her eyes
hold him
hate him
inside she is trapped, too
wounded and haunted by others to
never open up again.
Disappointment.
Deciding to remain alone.
"it's the only fucking way to be"
slowly
she rises to leave his side
softy
(her thoughts betray her)
she whispers—whispers—
"you mean so much to me
but i don't know how—
i don't remember how—
to love anyone
but
myself"

flagging democracy

Andy Neill
Faculty

SNAP, goes democracy; CRACK, the truth.

Great prickly ideal blow down
from the dark northwestern sky.
They roll and roll off wrinkled brow
into undulating furrows
of the fertile field.
They roll and roll end up on the hill.

Transcendent thought thunders
across the mindful and vacant,
startling a few awake.
Others pull the cozy blanket up tight
and continue to sleep.
Airwaves across the universe mesmerize the populous and pledge allegiance to pin striped truths.

SNAP, goes democracy; CRACK, the truth.

Invisible divisible water spills between the sheet. Upright and tight against graver matter.
Stars swirl above our heads brutal gale force winds bend the democratic poles.
Left then right our fabric swings.

SNAP, goes democracy; CRACK, the truth.

Try to stand on rolling ridges widen,
stare across the growing chasm.
Embarrassed, Pale, and Blue.
Fire, White Hot, with vein pumping blue.
Robert surfs debatable order
of our amended dreams.

SNAP, goes democracy; CRACK, the truth.

Ribbons of punctuated brilliance
on red stained sheet.
The great spear weaves genetic thread
into color sewn close and
seams we must keep together.

With one last shake the woman heaves
the home grown tablecloth into the air,
great meals digesting,
crumbs of the meaningless
tumble off its growing frayed edges.

SNAP, goes democracy; CRACK, the truth.

Tribute to Joe Camel

Matt Packard

They jumped to conclusions,
you took all the blame
Made a scapegoat, taken out of the game
Can't they see you weren't at fault,
kids will be kids
You were sacrificed for nothing,
can't believe what they did

CHORUS
We miss you like the freedom
We've cried and cried and cried
Taken before your time, in your prime
But you lived until you died.

They can take you off the billboards,
take you off the books
The man can end your life,
without a second look
But they can't back our jackets
or the C-notes in our draw
They can't cover up the shirts,
you still live outside our doors

CHORUS

Sometimes within that flame,
I see your vivid face.
I nod with admiration and keep you
in your place.
We know you're in heaven,
showing off your wings
Still so cool, playing pool,
this whole nation sings

CHORUS

Yes, Joe, you lived until you died.

My Mother Lied

Matt Packard

Momma always said when I was a boy
You can't get anything without trying
You proved when you bumped into me
Mothers are capable of lying

If your friend jumps off a bridge, you won't
Said every mother in town
But if you were the friend in this cliche
I'd do a flip on the way down.

CHORUS
I believed my mother, all along
Turns out some of what she said was wrong
I guess she's never seen two hearts collide
I can't believe my mother lied.

If it looks too good to be true, it is
Mothers warn their young men
But in that dress you're in tonight
You've proved all mothers wrong again.

She claimed "There's no such thing
as a perfect girl"
Once again, I'm afraid she's lied
Think I'll send her a letter today
And I'll put your picture inside

CHORUS

She lied about old St. Nick, the Easter Bunny
And that story 'bout the fairy and the tooth
But she told me that love lasts forever
I hope, for once, she told the truth

CHORUS

Bridge to Burn

Matt Packard

Don't you stand there lookin at her
Like she don't belong
Don't pretend that you still miss me
And that walking out was wrong
I know you'll try to lure me back
And hurt me once again
So tonight I'm finding comfort
In the arms of my new friend

We had a good thing going
Sometimes good things go away
So to be honest I don't want to hear
What you might have to say
You said some things you can't take back
I said things I regret
You hurt me bad, now I need her
To help me to forget

CHORUS 1
Our love will never be the same.
So I'm startin' up a brand new flame.
I don't wanna hear sweet concern.
'Cause I've got a bridge to burn.

That's right, I've got a bridge to burn
I've got a life to lead
So I would say a new flame
Is just what I might need
She tells me I'm the best thing,
To happen to her in a while.
It reminds me of our first date
The first time I saw you smile.

CHORUS 2
I've been lightin' flames now for a year.
They've gone out when it's raining tears.
Standing in the middle of a bridge
When will I learn?
I've got a bridge to burn.

BRIDGE
This is the fourth time that I've tried
This is the fourth time that I've cried
So I leave her with the others
Standing on the other side.

CHORUS 3
One by one I've watch the flames soak
Now I can't see them through the cloud
of smoke
Now I'm here beside you
With nowhere left to turn
As I watch the bridge just burn.

I'm gonna stand right here beside you
And feel your sweet concern,
Without a bridge to burn.

Never Gonna Be President

Matt Packard

We all reach the point
In our complicated lives
Where we set our dreams aside
To become husbands and wives.
When the realization hit me
That I am what I'm gonna be
My dreams in the rearview mirror
Didn't bother me.

CHORUS
I'll never be a rock star, but I'll sing you "Love Me Tender"
I'll never be a soldier, for it's to you "I Surrender"
I'm never gonna be president, what I'd much rather do
Is run around this little white house with you.

Back when I had longer hair
Me and the band hit the road.
Times got tough, we'd had enough
And nowhere left to go.
I'm glad those clubs were empty
And my voice was out of key
Haven't left this town again
Since I've had you with me.

CHORUS 2
I'll never be an all-star, but I'll have you on my team
I'll never be an actor, but I've got the role of my dreams
I'm never gonna be president, what I'd much rather do
Is run around this little white house with you.

BRIDGE
Some chase dreams they'll never catch
And have nothing left to do
I've given all mine up so
That this one dream can come true.

CHORUS 3
I could be an astronaut, you say I hung the moon.
I could be a race car driver, I get home too soon
Don't wanna be president, All I wanna do
Is run around this little white house with you.

Can't Stand Sitting
(An excerpt)

Matt Packard with
Susan Irvine

SUSAN:
Wazzup, Wazzup, I'm the Q-stick.
I don't play acoustic.
I'm down with the sound.
Bringin' smiles, never frowns.
I can flow like a river,
And my rhymes will deliver.
I don't claim to be a psychic
But I think you will like it
My 'ccino is frappa
Buy my auto parts at Napa
I'm a little bit smaller
Than the little white rappa.
It's absurd to ignore him
The girlies adore him.
Stick around while I bust this
Move to do him justice.

CHORUS
I'm always on my toes, no time to sleep.
I'm all up in your face, no secrets to keep.
Never find me on my ass, I ain't kidding.
Always on my feet 'cause I can't stand sitting.
Gotta stand up for yourself, heart unfurled.
Believe in yourself, you can change the world.
Get off the bench, it's time to start hitting.
Stand up for yourself,
but you can't stand sitting.

MATTY:
I spread the good word, so evil people fear me.
So high class, sometimes
only dogs can hear me.
Give GQ's interviews, like a slave we use
Rave reviews, cave renews,
Dave gave me news.
I never back down from shit, I'm always inside
Your hide. I'll twist your words
and make you think you lie.
Buck, buck, buck, you duck like John Kruk.
Stuck with no luck, you suck,
bet you thought I'd say fuck
I got the deal for the record,
for the record your Dead,
Make you plead the fifth,
when I ask you who your with.
Pull out my gun 'n' pack your running back
like Emitt Smith
I never ever ride without my B-I
in my tape player.
I should be locked up 'cause of the way
I rape players.
I mean lyrically, don't hit 'em with the dick,
that's sick
Hand this mic of mine to Irvine
'cause she's all about my clique.

SUSAN:
We see you sittin' on your asses, smokin' grasses
Dope for the masses, the bong passes.
Can we make you rise? You sit on shit like flies.
C'mon don't agonize, it's time to mobilize.
Wazzup, I'm disguised, you playas are busted
Your cars rusted, got me flust'd,
you can't be trusted.
There's so much to do,
but you sit on your wazzooh
You say it don't matter, your asses get fatter,
Your life's left in tatters, as blood splatters.
I got two good legs,
for which my homeboy begs
I always go to be standing,
up for things I'm demanding.
Commanding to get each man up off his can.
Don't care if it's dancin', prancin', advancin'
Long as it ain't Hanson or Manson.

CHORUS

Susan: I can't take giving up.
Matty: I'll be buried living up.
Susan: I'll be free at any cost.
Matty: You'll never find that I'm lost.
Susan: Can't get in if you don't get out.
Matty: I'm sure there's no doubt.
Susan: I'll never start quitting.
Matty: I can't stand sitting.

CHORUS

You Don't Love Me Anymore
A Country Song

Susan Irvine

I kick off these old cowboy boots
For the first time tonight
These would have been my dancing shoes,
But all we did was fight
My lipstick is still perfect,
Not smeared across my face
And this short skirt I'm wearing
Was nothing but a waste

CHORUS
I come home looking just about the same
As when I left
Now I know you don't love me anymore
Every hair in place, my makeup's
Still intact.
Now I know you don't love me anymore

The neighbors used to complain
'Bout the noises we would make
Now I wonder if your sounds of passion
Were real, or were they fake?
And now the neighbors still bitch
The police get the call
Complaints of all our screaming
That filters down the hall

CHORUS

You'd rip off my stockings,
and I'd make such a fuss
The only thing I've ridden lately
Is the public transit bus
You used to say you loved me,
Whispers that we'd never part
Now the only sound that I hear
Is the breaking of my heart

CHORUS

I'm tired of your screaming
At me when we're on the phone
Perhaps it's time to hang up,
I'm better off alone
I can mess up my own lipstick,
I don't need your lips for that
I could find a brand new cowboy,
And move on, you dirty rat!

CHORUS

I'm goin' to the honky-tonk
To buy myself a beer
And find myself a real man,
Someone to dry my tears
I'm gonna find a gentleman
Who doesn't fight or cuss
I'll be riding something tonight,
But it sure won't be a bus

CHORUS
I'll put on my lipstick, my
short skirt, my heels
All 'cause you don't "love" me any more
I'm gonna find out, honey,
How lovin' really feels
Thank God you don't "love" me anymore!

** The simple fact that this is a country song should make it obvious that I was inspired by none other than Mr. Matt Packard!

It Got Too Crowded

Susan Irvine

Don't talk to me!
Don't look at me that way,
I don't want to catch you smiling,
I might remember the
Good things

I might dwell on the memory
of you chasing me
With the toy gun,
foam bullets
fake power, fake machismo
(JUST LIKE YOU)
I might picture you
carrying me in your right arm,
toy gun in your left,
And maybe because fake power
doesn't balance true weakness,
I could remember how you dropped me
on the cold, hard floor,
then, cradling me-
Gun abandoned,
mumbled apologies—

If I recall how your guard dropped
mine might

"My Wicker box that I keep memories in"

Susan Irvine

There wasn't anything to do,
really, besides accept the
pictures you drew and save
them. After all, you asked for
my phone number. TWICE...
and you still didn't call. Yet
you'd sit next to me in
class, doodling my name and
drawing me pictures of mountains
and flowers and candles...

You signed them with "love."
Didn't you know how stuff
like that affects silly girls?
I still have those pictures,
for Christ sake. All of them.
They're four years old now.
They're still signed "love, Joe."
I'm still silly, I guess. Maybe,
now, with a little stupid
mixed in.

My Hang-Ups and Everything I don't do about them

Susan Irvine

I look in the mirror,
I crane my neck—
Wave my arms
and spin in circles
I wiggle my butt
And jiggle my thighs

I swear to God I won't
Eat any candy tomorrow
I'll take the stairs
and not the elevator
I'll walk, not drive
I'll lose two pounds by Sunday

I go to sleep full of ambition
Thirteen hours later, I'm
Walking off the elevator eating
a Milky Way looking for
my car keys and accepting
an invitation to go out for
ice cream on Sunday.

Human; Nature

Susan Irvine

With your breath smelling
of the weak tea I'd make
On Wednesday evenings, a ritual
established out of boredom
And continued for the sake
of intimate conversation—
"Must be French," you'd said the first time, teasingly,
So loyal to your bitter-tasting Earl Grey—
I draw you close to me, mindful
of our full cups,
And you cradle the contours
of your marvelous face
In the simple angle
of my neck and shoulder,
Down the throat, across for the shoulder,
We fit together like puzzle pieces
Maybe that's why I'm so puzzled lately,
In place of words I offer only breathing
My sigh condenses on your hair
and almost dampens it
A little more sighing and
your hair will be like
Grass in the morning,
perhaps the same grass we sit on
When we wait for the confusion of daily life
to descend
Hanging on to the night before
Not regretting missed sleep,
Except that your hair smells like daffodils,
a little more intoxicating than
A five a.m. fog,
And your skin smells like my yesterdays,
after all,
It's you who's near me the most,
When I'm angry, or in need of solace, or lustful,
You're the one I seek out to feel happy

You helped to create my yesterdays,
My sigh rustles
through your hair like wind
That is neither gale nor breeze
And is either ominous or peaceful—
No one can tell—
I hope my words sound
like running water,
Not thunder.

Pama

Tammy Raynor

There are no fat people in heaven.

How do you know that?

Cause God wouldn't make somebody be fat for eternity, too.

God doesn't make anyone fat, Pama. Fat people make fat people.

God knows it's not all my fault. Anyway...there are no fat people in heaven.

What about Mamall Mildred? I loved her just the way she was. I'd hate to think of a bunch of svelte, hot looking grandmas running after people in the afterlife who don't even recognize them.

Well, maybe not Mamall, but everybody else will feel their hip bones sticking out.

Pelvic bones, I thought, sharp edges beneath a tan and creaseless covering. A wonderfully simple memory, one that I'm sure Pama Kay did not have. My poor cousin had spent her life smothered in folds of flesh, huffing her way through the "Halls of Humiliation High School" and waiting red-faced at the bus stop for special children. I remember hiding behind the big hair and tiny derrieres of the "in" crowd until Pama Kay had waddled out of sight.

The new doctor give me some diet pills that I ain't took yet.

Diet pills? Are you sure that's ok with your high blood pressure, Pama?

He give 'em to me. Cathy says when I lose weight that she's gonna take me shopping. You can come, too.

That'll be nice. Pama. I gotta run, ok?

Come and see me sometimes and you can call whenever you want to.

Ok, I'll try to make time next week.

I had said that many times. Many times I had offered impromptu excuses at the pleading invitations. I'd had a hard time facing Pama Kay all my life. Was it the hypocritical prejudice I surrendered to? Perhaps it was anger at the fact that we could have been close if only... With my own thighs rubbing together at times,

reality reminded me that poor Pama Kay and I were not that different after all.

Eight days later, I left the chapel thinking that I had indeed made good on my last empty promise to her. I had seen Pama the next week, lying still, encased in a king-sized casket that my mother had paid for with arms barely able to cross atop the 410 pounds of her. How relieved she looked. The freight train commotion of her labored breathing now quieted forever.

Maybe God had done this to her, I thought angrily. The least he could do now was to give Pama back her pelvic bones. I imagined her lying on her back on a satin chaise, slender arms posed above her head with a look in her eyes that was at last, not hunger.

Lyrics Without a Love Song

Amy Riley

I once found it charming,
Your naivete disarming,
But now it's become quite alarming,
I'm afraid you might just be a fool.
Is it me you're attracting,
Or simply distracting?
I hope you're not acting,
Because then I'd be the fool.

But who am I to say
Who's right or wrong?
It would take too long,
And it doesn't matter anyway
Who's wrong or right.
Could take all night,
And I hope it does.
It looks like you're leaving.
I hope you're deceiving
Or I will be grieving.
Oh, what am I to do?
There's no use pretending
Our love isn't ending.
Is it worth defending?
What's the right thing to do?

Road Rage

Amy Riley

I am a tyrant of the tollway.
I rule with an iron fist
And a lead foot.
Look on my tracks,
Ye slowpokes, and despair.

You shall not merge before me, oh no,
For I shall defy the laws of physics
And become one

With the car in front of me
Before anyone intrudes
Between me and my destination.

Time spent in travel is time wasted;
It must be minimized by any means.

Oh, how I long for the Starship Enterprise
And its transporter beams,
But, alas, I must drive,
And drive I shall,
And heaven help anyone
Who stands in my way.

Road Rage: One Week Later

The tyrant has been deposed
By a distracted teenager.
Traffic was lighter than usual,
But still no walk in the park.

Driving forty-five,
Then suddenly stopped;
Not a problem
For a driver such as me.
The girl behind, however,
Had other things on her mind.
A sea of brake-lights went unnoticed,
And instantly our cars become one.

Her low hood beneath my high trunk,
her hysterical apologies
And my callous sarcasm,
"Nice drivin', Tex,"
as I stepped from the car.

No one was hurt,
Except for my poor Cavalier
(Her car was messed up, too, but who cares?)
Her parents came
And tried to blame it on me;
The officer and I both laughed.

Now I find myself checking the rear-view
Every 0.3 seconds.
Look on my brake-lights,
Ye morons, and slow down!

Surgeon General's Warning: Hassling Smokers May Be Hazardous to Your Health

Amy Riley

"Why do you gotta do that?" asks a complete stranger, as I light a cigarette, waiting for the train to arrive. This scenario is repeated at least once a week; no sooner do I light up, than some saintly altruist braves the dangers of second-hand smoke to preach to me that I may be causing harm to myself and others. The easiest solution to the query is that smoking prevents me from killing people who ask questions like that, but there are really many reasons why I support the tobacco industry, though perhaps none other so compelling.

My mother has smoked cigarettes my entire life. She claims that she didn't smoke while pregnant with me, but I have my suspicions. My father smoked cigars from before I was born until I was about nineteen. I also have a brother, thirteen years my senior who has smoked for as long as I can remember. Growing up in a house full of smokers has probably

had a large influence on my smoking, giving me the excuse, "Well, none of them are dead so it must be okay for me, too."

Somewhere around the age of eight, I started. My best friend lived right across the street, and his mother always kept a carton of Newport Lights in the pantry. About twice a week, we would sneak in, swipe a pack, and ride our bikes to the cornfield down the street. There we would secretly smoke at our leisure. It was cool. The big kids hung around the street-corners just to smoke. I have an image of my friend's mom walking into the pantry, checking her carton and swearing to herself that she must cut down.

Of course, winter inevitably came and made bicycling to cornfield unfeasible, so we quit. My next smoking experience came about eight years later, when I was a junior in high school. The latter two years of high school opened up a world of social possibilities: I had become cool enough that college students would actually speak to me, and most of those college students smoked. Do you think I was about to make the social faux pas of refusing a cigarette offered to me by a nineteen year old? Absolutely not! I began to smoke socially on the weekends, maybe finishing a pack a week.

This continued until I went away for my freshman year of college. During my first week at U of I, I caught a particularly nasty sinus infection which made breathing regular air unpleasant and smoking impossible, so I quit again. About a year later, when I changed my major to applied alcoholism, smoking became an integral part of my lifestyle. This time the cigarettes won for good; I began smoking full-time and got up to about three packs a day at one point. The university politely asked me to leave, and I embarked on a series of full-time jobs, which all allowed unlimited smoking opportunities.

During my twenty-second year, my father died, and I quit smoking. Though my father died of cancer, it was unrelated to smoking. Still, having a close family member die of an illness related to the one that will almost surely claim me someday was a strong incentive. The final decision was made after I visited my doctor for a pulled hamstring. He heard me cough and asked if I smoked. I told him I did. He told me to quit, and I said, "Okay." I didn't smoke for about a year and a half.

It was a miserable eighteen months, of watching my mom and brother continue to smoke. I withdrew socially because I knew if I went out for drinks with my friends (who all smoke) that I wouldn't be able to control myself. The physical withdrawal to nicotine only lasted about a week, but the psychological addition will remain for the rest of my life. My weak will and need for socializing were too strong, and I returned to my smoking ways.

I have now been an ex-non-smoker for about ten months. I have a fabulous collection of excuses for why I smoke. Working full time and going to college full time contribute to a huge amount of stress, and smoking seems to relieve it to some extent. I also smoke out of spite. Even when I wasn't smoking, I detested holier-than-thou nonsmokers who would complain endlessly about those around them smoking, even if they were in a crowded pool-hall or nightclub. I did not want to turn into one of those people. Also, using a simple equation, I deduced that: a) Smoking annoys them; b) They annoy me; and therefore, c) I should smoke in retaliation. A final excuse for why I smoke might be that I'm just too cool not to.

To all you reading this who smoke, you can stop reading now. Relax. Go have a smoke. Enjoy! The rest of this essay is addressed to the non-smokers. I consider myself to be a po-

lite smoker: I only ever smoke within designated smoking areas of any public place that I visit; if I notice a pregnant woman, small children or people using an oxygen tank near where I'm smoking, I'll stop. I never drop cigarette butts on the ground and leave them there, or throw them out my car window. In return for these courtesies, I expect some to be extended to me and all polite smokers. When you pass us by, while we are in a designated smoking area, don't give us dirty looks or begin coughing melodramatically. Also, don't tell us that smoking is bad for us. We already know. It's written right here on the packs. A comedian, Bill Hicks (who died of smoking related pancreatic cancer), once said, "Listen, we'll smoke, we'll get the tumors and we'll die. Deal?"

Prince Charming

Rebecca Sailor

They tell me there are more fish in the sea
But this don't much matter to me.
And that once I stop looking so hard
Someone new will appear,
But what if I miss him I fear?

I cry and I try to stop hopin' so hard,
But I'm lonely and I want to know...

Where are you Prince Charming?
'Cause this princess is starting to pale.
Where are you Prince Charming?
'Cause my eyesight is starting to fail.

I envisioned my dress
At the age of sixteen
Perfect, and white, and beautifully tight,
But gravity's taking its toll!

I cry and I try to stop hopin' so hard,
But I've kissed every toad
and what I want to know...

Where are you Prince Charming?
'Cause this princess is starting to pale.
Where are you Prince Charming?
'Cause my eyesight is starting to fail.

My sister and momma
Say "Have patience, you'll meet
your match."
But they are both married
And I'm the one losing my chance!

I cry and I try to stop hopin' so hard,
But I'm left in the dust and I need to show...

Where are you Prince Charming?
'Cause this princess is starting to pale.
Where are you Prince Charming?
'Cause my eyesight is starting to fail.

Well, you better show your face awful quick,
'Cause the waiting is making me sick
And I'm tired, and I wanna get
married before
I'm retired...so...

Where are you Prince Charming?
'Cause this princess is starting to pale.
Where are you Prince Charming?
'Cause my eyesight is starting to fail.

[Spoken, not sung]:

Are you there Prince Charming?
I cain't see you, honey!
Let me git my reading glasses!

[I think that each of these parts should be sung by a different actress who has her own special reason for thinking she is too old to not be married. Gradually, it should go from a young actress to a much older one (the one who "cain't see") at the end, to show that some women will always have a fear about not finding a husband.]

I'd Wrastle a Gator Before I'd Lose Yer' Love

Rebecca Sailor

I went to the bar on a Saturday night
And I knew there had to be a fight
You were there with Sue Ann upon your arm
And I felt sure she'd suffer some harm.
I caught hold, and she suffered all right,
I threw that pig back to the farm.

Sooo-ey! [She chases a woman off stage like one would in a pig's corral.]

'Cause when a man like you
Is sent from above
You know I'd wrastle a gator
Before I'd lose yer' love.

Then came along Bessie June
Singing a tune
And settin' in your lap
I changed it all with one hard slap
And she won't be settin' down soon,
When it comes to my man
    I don't take no crap.

Back to pasture, Bessie! [She runs somebody off with a smack on the ass like you would a cow.]

'Cause when a man like you
Is send from above
You know I'd wrastle a gator
Before I'd lose yer' love.

I also found you with Mary Lou
I had to beat her black and blue
For kissin' and a breathin' all over your neck
I whipped that mare to bloody heck,
Poor old ugly Mary Lou,
I'll teach that tramp to kiss on you.

Giddyup, horsie!
    (Make a whip cracking noise)

Then one day I met my match
But I wasn't going to throw back MY catch,
I fought like a hound dog, but I lost the bet
That hussy had an alligator for a pet.

'Cause when a man like you
Is sent from above
You know I'd wrastle a gator
Before I'd lose yer' love.

I fought like a hound dog, but I lost the bet,
That hussy had an alligator for a pet.

'Cause when a man like you
Is sent from above
You know I'd wrastle that gator
All over again,
for yer' love.

(Howl like a lovesick hound dog.)

[I don't really know what is going on with this song. It started out as a response to some weird Florida women I met that really seem to feel like this. Now, along with "Prince Charming", I'm thinking they might become part of some crazy redneck musical play. Originally, I had thought of this as a song to make fun of country singers and some southern women I had known, but now I am not sure...it might have taken on a life of its own. I can't see it so much as a solo anymore, but part of a group on stage, and with action involving the "Sooo-ey" and "Back to Pasture!" parts. It might be one woman's song, or a group of women trying to outdo each other. Feel free to give me any comments.]

A Layperson's Guide to Feeling Comfortable and Having Fun with Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Rebecca Sailor

We are on the verge of a sexually transmitted disease revolution. With all the stuff festering in the 16-24 age bracket, I think we'd better examine our fear and prejudice since we are probably all one of the infected. I'll go through the various diseases and my personal experience with each, in an effort to help those of you with apprehension come up to speed. We've got the EEOC to combat racism, we've got Ms. Magazine for feminism...it is high time somebody championed STDism.

Herpes, Flerpes

When I first found out I had it, I cringed and cried. But after a while, I realized that this virus was nothing to be afraid of. Jeez...just listen to the sound of the word "Herpes." It is undeniably cute in the way it sounds, much like the word "puppies", "birdies", or "furbies". Before you start to think "Blech, herpes"...try to imagine a cute little smiling blister named "Herbie the Herpie" saying hello and doing a little dance.

For those of you anti-herpeists (those who discriminate against those who are "packing virus"), I'm going to give you a quick list of people with the herpes virus. If you've ever had chicken pox, a cold sore, a canker sore, shingles, mumps or ever kissed anybody, you've probably got herpes, too. And once you've got it, you've got if forever. The only difference between people with herpes and most everybody without is that the people with herpes KNOW they are afflicted. God know that with all the cold sores floating around elementary schools, combined with the high risk of lip-gloss-sharing that goes on...the virus is

everywhere. Once you add in these children's innocent good-night kisses to their parents...the world has got herpes. No age group is safe.

Why are some brands of herpes "not filthy" when others are "filthy?" Now, I'm not going to tell you which brand of herpes I have. But if you knew, would you think of me as a "whore" or just somebody who needs a good dose of Carmex lip balm? To quote the herpes webpage, does it matter if it is the "upstairs" or the "downstairs" type? To me doesn't matter what simplex or what form it appears in. In my opinion, it is allfor-one and one-for-all with Herbie.

Ex-boyfriends and Other Warty Growths

This same logic holds true for genital warts, otherwise known as the HPV. Since when did we get so picky about where a wart grew? We don't tell little children they are immoral for having warts all over the toes and their hands. Usually we just tell them they must have touched a toad. It is the same thing with genital warts. Most of my ex-boyfriends are toad-like, or at least they never turned out to be princes. I've been slathered in one of these two kinds of warts, but I'd be either an outcast or a normal kid depending on which type I confessed to.

Drips, Sniffles, and Mite-Bites

Speaking of ex-boyfriends, who hasn't caught a nice fresh case of gonorrhea or chlamydia from sleeping with one? In this day and age, you are considered a virgin until you've caught one of the above. If chlamydia is the "common cold of STD's" then why is it so scary? Everybody gets colds! But "if left untreated, these diseases can lead to sterility." A winter cold can lead to pneumonia or even death, but we don't stop dating people with the sniffles. When little kids catch lice in their "upstairs" hair, we wash it with Rid and tell them not to be embarrassed for using somebody else's comb or trying on a friend's crawling hat. But when adults get in this situation, their attempt at sharing with others is seen as malicious and dirty.

If I told you I have the big G, would you look at me in class and think "the reason she never smiles is because she must be experiencing painful oozing and burning." Or, upon finding out I had the common cold, would you think I'd really been around? Worse yet, if I admitted to having crabs, would you think that wiggle in my walk was an attempt to scratch an itch?

Getting STD's for Fun

Yuck, you are thinking! What kind of shameful promiscuity does it take to know about this shameful stuff? Not to worry. When it comes to getting an STD, there is nothing to it. It is an activity available to the young and old, new and experienced, careful and careless. After contraction, there is little to be gained by finger pointing and insult...it is better to just figure out the options. Soon you'll find out that what your frigid friends ironically catch on the first try, your prostitute exboyfriend has STILL avoided by miracle. Blaming really takes the fun out of the experience. How can "ping-pong" diseases not be a good time? With so many varieties, why not collect them like hunting trophies? One should wear an STD proudly like a scaly red patch of courage.

STD Myths and Other Propaganda

You may be one of the so-called STD free. Many young women or men will head to their local Planned Parenthood, insecurity in hand, to request the full Monty of STD exams. They can pry, draw blood, scrape, palpate, perform

the dreaded small crevice Q-tip probe, assess risk factors, and culture all they want...most of that stuff still won't show up unless you are in the throes of burning, irritation or oozing. If you currently lack the smelly, bumpy symptoms, they'll send you on your way with a clean bill of health. This way, you can be carrying for months or years, kindly delivering it to all your partners AND be able to say guilt-free "don't worry, I've been tested for everything."

As if the myth about accurate testing isn't bad enough, STD's have made accommodations for you avid condom users too. Hoity-toity condom advocates will haughtily say, "I know this didn't come from ME, I've always used condoms!" I hate to inform you, but most of that stuff slips right on by those latex suckers. How many times has a fledgling infected exclaimed "But we used condoms!" only to hear that the sad truth that the stuff travels just as easily from unwrapped hands, tongues or noses. About the only thing condoms are really good at preventing (besides enjoyable sex) is AIDS or syphilis, the STD's I haven't mentioned. I'm ignoring those because instead of just being irritating or embarrassing, they can actually kill you or drive you crazy. I can't wait for the day I can include these in my list above, and we can all giggle at having AIDS a few different times in our youth—and joke about the "mad" time we had with syphilis.

The worst myth of all comes from the health and disease control propaganda. Those gooey-looking, sordid photos they paste in textbooks and pamphlets are enough to strike fear in the bravest genitalia. As with all advertising, you need to take a step back and understand what kind of idea they are trying to promote. I'm not sure what kind of people they use for models, but I have to believe that those are the worst case scenarios. I've had innumerable friends or lovers who have consulted the doctor over microscopic ingrown hairs, moles or bike blisters. You can bet that most people would be in the doctors office BEFORE their bouquet grew into a giant cauliflower, rutabaga or sprouted shiitake mushrooms. They pick the créme-de-la-chancres for those photos.

A Call to Action

I'm not calling for promiscuity, premarital sex, or teenage pregnancy. It isn't for everybody to savor. And I'm sure not asking for abstinence, because that is MORE miserable than having a painful sore. What I am asking is that we take the taboo off sexual diseases. Let's have a national coming-out day for STD's. Maybe we should start by all secretly writing our STD's on a piece of paper and putting them in a giant hat. We'll stop with the name calling and begin a new sexual revolution. But until then, I'm not telling. My legs might have been open, but my mouth is shut.

Happy Holidays

Rebecca Sailor

My husband is a man I never married. I love him immensely! Our hearts fused together in a whirlwind romance of violence and guilt. The moments we spent together were so beautifully intense that he never leaves my mind for very long. It has been three years since I left him in

order to preserve my life, but the relationship remains. I can be with him again any time I feel like by picking up a new boyfriend who is just the same. It's handy because the elements of him are always there, and I get to have sex with as many different men as I want. It's a great relationship because he allows me a lot of independence. Besides, I know we'll be together again someday...eventually he'll find me no matter where I go.

My child is a little baby that died ten years ago. The incompetent doctors that killed her gave her immortality too. My daughter never cries or annoys me, and looks just like me. As she grows older, she gains the beauty, intelligence, and other traits she might have never possessed if she'd been able to survive. She never disappoints me, she never tells me she hates me. I get all the good things about being a parent without ever having to change dirty diapers or rushing off to school conferences. She is an absolute convenience, a dream child. I never got to hold her while she was alive, but I also didn't get a chance to hit her, or torture her emotionally, or pass out drunk while my husband molested her. Because she is the perfect daughter, I'm allowed to be the perfect parent I couldn't have been.

My parents are thousands of miles away, and the absence makes our relationship work just fine. We don't fight anymore, and we can't give each other bruises this far away. My mother can tell everybody that I am wonderful without my presence to contradict her. Her girl is happy, dating wealthy men, and thin, out West. My father can't scream and humiliate this rotten kid into a corner way out here. I don't have to smell my mother's booze through the telephone, and she can't smell mine.

My sister likes me much better now that I've eliminated my competition. It is a lot easier for her to rule everybody when I'm not there. Our relationship has flourished in the face of my failures, because now that she can advise ME she feels a lot better about herself. She calls me to tell me her accomplishments, to let me know I'm down so far that I'll never catch up. It really takes the pressure off! Everyone wins! The absence of family on Christmas and Holidays might seem a little lonely, but not to worry. I am surrounded by them even more on the days I am really alone. I never have to go to bed alone because they're always on my mind, and when I wake up by myself screaming, you can be sure that they were around to help get it started. They are always around; they're the perfect family.

Beauty Marks, or Runaway Vanity

Rebecca Sailor

In fifth grade, I had a teacher called Mrs. Irwin. She had a large brown mole on her neck with a tarantula of black hairs crawling from it. I was mesmerized by the mole every time I approached her desk. I could not believe a woman could neglect such a horrifying appendage. My fear was that I could become old and

forgetful, empty of vanity, and be ogled by horrible young girls.

My fear was understandable. At one time my own mother looked and dressed like a supermodel. She had since digressed to a murky state of sweatpants and bad permanent wave. She compared brands of maxi-pads for price and function in front of the entire supermarket shopping world. Slumping into midlife, she neglected her bikini line and had a permanent underarm shadow regardless of shaving. I cringed at the adventuresome forests and vowed to never have unwanted hair.

My moustache started as a single hair protruding from a dark black mole. My mother told me that the mole was a beauty mark, like Marilyn Monroe's. The mark really was beautiful, except for one straight blonde hair perched on the end of it. In seventh grade, as the locomotive of vanity began building momentum, I plucked it out.

I remarked upon the removal to my friend Suzie's mother, hoping for approval. Suzie's mother was a master of cosmetic arts; covered in Mary Kay concealer and powder base, spattered with hairspray spittle. She knew all the ugly secrets of feminine hygiene; she owned a beauty salon. My mother and I furtively referred to her place as the "Redneck Beauty Parlor." It was like a plastic-covered, sparkle-seated bar room where salon lushes bought hair tonics and specialty shampoos like martinis. They went in for their weekly nail art fix, and at the end of the day stylists swept up all the trimmed bits left from their customers.

Suzie's mother looked at me very seriously after I told her about the uprooting of the virgin hair. "You know," she said, widening her butterflyfeeler eyelashes, "if you pull them out they grow back twice as dark." I refused to believe. Suzie's mother was always trying to sabotage me. I was sure she gave me bad advice in order to ruin me and make her own daughter look better. I made it a point to pay more attention to my facial hair than ever.

For my thirteenth birthday, my grandmother sent me a package of girl supplies. It was stuffed with choking bottles of "Love's Baby Soft" perfume, Dep Hair Gel, and disposable razors. Hidden in the pile like a hand grenade was a yellow plastic container of Nair Hair remover for legs. I quickly skipped over it so that nobody would think I had hair to remove. I made fun of my sister's hair instead. "Maybe you should use it, monkey girl." She was hairier than I was.

Later that night, I fondled the bottle alone in the bathroom. I read and reread the directions. "Test on small area of skin before applying to larger area. FOR USE ON LEGS ONLY. May cause redness or rash on other skin surfaces." No matter how many times I read the instructions, the underlined message remained: FOR USE ON LEGS ONLY."

Practicing selective belief, I smeared Nair Hair remover everywhere...my legs, my bikini line, and even my upper lip. The harmless blond hair "simply melted away." It was gone! I admired my hairless lip in the mirror and went to bed.

When I woke up in the morning, I was greeted with tragedy. Overnight, my upper lip had swollen and puffed with a bright pink rash. It was in the shape of my Nair application the night before. My sister was bursting with cruelty. For a week she made fun of my lip rash in front of family and friends. I was an outcast. Karma played its own trick the same week. My sister snuck into the bathroom and stole my bottle of Nair. She applied it to her upper lip, arms, neck, and eyebrows. I might have been temporarily injured by vanity, but she had been

marred for life with stupidity.

When the hair grew back, it was a tiny bit darker. In addition to evicting the single ogre that resided on the mountain of my beauty mark, I started evacuating the friends that surrounded it. They were really only visible in the winter months when I became very pale. Pretty soon I realized that Suzie's mother had been right...they were growing back twice as dark. The hair protruding from my mole had become black and thick...like the whiskers on my ape-haired father.

I plucked and plucked. I couldn't stop. I told myself every time that it would be the last...I would start saving for electrolysis. Having a burning needle inserted into my hair follicle would be nothing compared to the emotional pain this defect was causing me. I imagined the sparks that would fly when they electrocuted the malicious hair follicles. It would be like the fourth of July. But I didn't stop...it was like a disease...an addiction to self-grooming. My mother claimed she couldn't see anything at all. So did my friends. I knew that true woman friends lie when it comes to beauty. I also knew that no matter how kind, they would be powerless to refrain from secret gossip about my defect. I continued to pluck.

I struggled with the persistent moustache until I went to college. I would douse my lip with peroxide and rubbing alcohol until the tender hairs broke off or bleached white. An amateur, I soaked my lip awkwardly in lemon juice, tore hairs off with masking tape...face peels...you name it. Nothing worked. Dark red shame kept me from getting a professional job at the Redneck Beauty Salon. A moustache invisible to others haunted me on a daily basis.

In college, my roommate suggested I buy some "moustache bleach." I had never heard of it! I went to Walgreen's to investigate. Right next to the Nair Hair Remover was my new miracle product...créme hair bleach. No wonder I had never seen it...nightmares of misuse Nair still haunted me. My savior was in a turquoise box, but I was too ashamed to purchase it. I thumbed through magazines, greeting cards, and pain relievers, always keeping a secret eye on what I really wanted. I couldn't do it alone. I had the guts to buy condoms and pregnancy tests, but I had to get a friend to buy my moustache bleach.

Once I had finally obtained the concoction, I carefully followed the directions. "On plastic tray, measure out two spatulas full of facial hair créme. Wipe off spatula. Next, measure out one spatula full of bleach activator powder onto tray. Mix together well. Using spatula, spread on unsightly hair. For interest of economy, use a two part créme to one part activator for large bleaching jobs." I mixed up a large batch. I tested it first on my belly and toe hair.

It worked! I was saved. My posture improved. My social life skyrocketed. Men followed me around like hungry kittens and begged for dates. I was even nominated for president of my dormitory...well, not really. But I felt a lot better about myself. My blonde moustache made my life easier. No more daily examinations in well-lit mirrors, no more compulsive plucking before job interviews or romantic interludes. Confidence! I smiled big smiles, shame free. Passing myself in the mirror, giving myself a victory grin, I suddenly noticed how yellow my teeth were. Had they always been that yellow?

Chicken Livers

Rebecca Sailor

There are fewer and fewer "real" restaurants left in America. The Olive Garden has become our Italian place, and Chili's has become our Mexican place. We go to Bennigan's to get burgers and beer, to The Blackeyed Pea and Boston Market to get "home-style" canned food. Red Lobster is our seafood place, usually across from Denny's or IHOP. The markets have been nicely hanging off the edge of the steam table to serve as work space. A reach-in cooler, four gas ovens with burners, three flat top grills, and two deep fryers are in a straight line against one wall. Four feet across, facing them on the opposite side, are a line of steam tables with heat lamps, a sandwich bar, three microwaves, a refrigerator, and a toaster stand with cups and bowls underneath it. The steam tables are topped off with platters like another other restaurant, and the pretty round blue plates used for blue plate specials.

All these grills and steam tables, fryers and reach-in coolers do one thing besides prepare food for everyone that comes to Wellson's Cafe: they make the kitchen unbearably hot. In months like July, there is no relief from the heat and humidity. To walk out the back door is to get assaulted by mosquitoes or bees because it is hardly any nicer outside. Eva and Ruby have been friends for a long time, though, and are both pretty interesting girls. They usually talk the time away in between Wednesday night meatloaf, Thursday night beef liver and onions, and Friday night fish fry. By the time Saturday night prime rib and Sunday chicken and dumpling soup rolls around, they are both probably glad to get Monday away from each other.

Tonight is beef liver, which is always miserable. Each time someone orders liver, it gets breaded on the spot. A big, bloody pan of the sliced meat is pulled out of the refrigerator and brought to the grill. It looks just like what you want mapped and backed up with so much advertising cash that they are squeezing everybody in their niche out. Only the unique or spectacular small restaurant can survive. When people want something as disgusting and special as beef liver, chicken giblets and pork hocks, they come to Wellson's Cafe.

Eva is breading up two orders of liver for some know-nothing that dared order them. As she puts the pan back in the refrigerator, she notices a bloody bit that has fallen to the floor. She stands over it in her skirt, spreads her legs and gets Ruby's attention. "A little accident," she says, holding her belly and making a sad face. They always get their periods at the same time, and this is one of them. They both think the joke is hilarious. The young boys better look out for Eva next week. She is always crazy for them the week after.

Ruby breaks a genuine home-style biscuit in half and covers it with a scoop of chicken giblets. Giblets are some organs from the inside of a chicken. They are served boiled over biscuits with lots of homemade gravy on top. Giblets look like spleens or hearts or some sort of hidden sphincter cut in half. Whatever they are, they explode during the boiling process. Sometimes if they have to heat a little, they burst even more, spitting brown strings all over the microwave. Giblets have been known to attack even when reheated. Vengeful giblets wait to explode until they can burn an arm, like tiny bombs waiting to go off. They are a delicious shade of dead gray. Eva and Ruby use lots of gravy so the customers can't get a good look at them.

The restaurant has a lot of history. It has been around since 1926. Some of the employees are as old as the restaurant. Mona has been working at Wellson's since she was thirteen. She must be at least seventy. She started baking biscuits and muffins, and has done every job since. She still cooks lunch even though she can hardly read the orders anymore. Some days Mona will give the full tour, showing how the prep room was once her and her sister's bedroom, and the room where her uncle shot himself. Now it is the office.

CHAPTER 2

All the gossip in the world originates at Wellson's. The employees and customers have to be very careful how they joke. People can end up pregnant, dead, addicted to drugs, or even engaged to be married from irresponsible chatter in a small town restaurant. Vocalizing non-public information at Wellson's is a tragic mistake. The grapevine in a small town restaurant rivals the most high-tech communication the WBC has created.

The newest happened last Thursday. Ruby and Eva arranged a girl's night out at the Country-Gal Bar down the street. Ruby danced so hard that the under wire popped right out of her bra on the dance floor. (Ruby's nickname is "Boobzilla.") She had to go to the bathroom and throw it away. Eva found another in the endless stream of younger men to play with, and made out shamelessly in front of all the people her mother employs. Eva's nineteen-year old Swedish twin cousins got drunk illegally with the prep cook. Terri, the young waitress, danced on the table for dollar bills from the usually uptight older waitresses. The underage bus girls snuck in and got irritated when nobody would buy them drinks, especially when the Swedes had been supplied so generously. The night clean-up guy dirtydanced with one of the frustrated married waitresses later in the evening, and some wondered if it didn't go beyond that. Everyone felt terrible the next morning and decided that Ruby and Eva would never organize a night like that again until possibly next Thursday. It was a grape stomp of gossip juice.

Ordinary Time
Sunday, February 8, 1998

Susan Sink
Faculty

Early February. A thaw.
Light passes through
The stained glass pope
With his Proclamation.

In the gospel, Jesus
Is rowed offshore to preach
To five thousand.
He orders the boats out
At dawn, though the night
Has been fished empty.

With tired arms, they let down

Their nets, and I know it—
Stromboli with Ingrid Bergman
Rowed before Rossolini's lens—
An eruption of fish at the surface,
The boats loaded almost to sinking.

The monk talks about conversatio,
Conversions so small they aren't noticed.
The language: silence, surrender.
Listen.

The presswoman says
There is no silence:
Her machine all day,
Pops television at night.

Is this why it isn't working?
Why do I fall
Asleep? My prayer is
Wrong. Sin, and pain,
And beautiful, sweet guilt.

First, learn the sound of your life.
You can't hate that sound. Listen.
Tie your knots very strong,
Before you let the nets down,
At dawn, into the teeming water.

Lorine Niedecker

Susan Sink
Faculty

Louis Z. in New York C.
Narrowed her unpredictable
River of words to a trickle—

The "weedy speech"—Marshy—
Floodless and Accomplished—Partial—
Not the Wild flatlands of Wisconsin story—

She drafted the Narrative Vein of Gold—Divined—
Drilled deep—Exposed to Light and Air—Mined—
Instead of seined through mesh or Rattling in the Tin.

She revised in a Fire—to Make
Those who weren't listening Hear—Bells—
No Stranger to Deafness—Loss—Clarity.

Lorine had a whole story, Plains of Vision—
They wanted her Modern—Dickinson—Exiled—
Disciplined, she Disciplined—Speak with Space or not at All.

Easter Week
Monastery of the Holy Cross, Chicago

Susan Sink
Faculty

Glut, After Lent the Brothers Celebrate
With Meals and Meals of Meat.
Dessert. Rich Sauces. Wine.
Repeat. Seven Days. Repeat.
The Worship, The Readings, The Hymns.
One Day is Not Enough!
The Lord is Always Rising.
As if to Repeat
Will Sate.
Finally, The Monk
Takes Only a Pork Chop,
The Curved Bone Reminiscent—
Something To Leave on the Plate,
Something Carved from the Animal.

Shadowclipse

Ted M. Thompson
Faculty

I. The Present

Straight line of demarcation
Between the snow and mud
Where bare, un-ivied college walls
Prevented the melting sun.

Thus the power of shadow.

Her leaden physiognomy
A barometer of gloom
The blackened sky was unobscured
But she couldn't find the moon.

Thus the power of shadow.

I sensed the swing of pendulum
Descending through my brain
From the pit of my deception
Found fellowship in pain.

Thus the power of shadow.

II. Come the Four Horsemen*

Me and my

Clone of nothingness

Strolling down the avenue

Avoiding cracks
Avoiding cracks

'Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the shadow'
'That goes in and out with me

And everywhere that I go'
My mind is clouded by
Lemont Cranston's laugh.

Me and my—

Is everybody happy?

*The Four Jousting Horsemen of the Shadowclipse are T.S. Eliot, R.L. Stevenson, Lemont Cranston (Character who became The Shadow on the radio program), and Ted Lewis (vaudevillian of early 20th century whose signature number was "Me and My Shadow" and who always queried the audience, "Is everybody happy?"). A fifth horsemen might be Amiri Baraka whose "In Memory of Radio" was in the back of mind. T.M.T.

Poem

Teri Danai Vrakas

I am overwrought by your face
your mess
your stealing kiss
my sweet distress
and now there is not even darkness
    surrounding the stars
darkness would be something;
there isn't anything real
that's really ours

It Is A Crime. . .

Teri Danai Vrakas

to have touched
so amorously
my naked feet upon yours. . .
it is a tragedy to have shot ecstasy
    into your foot
with such acute sensation
that you could melt like my lipstick did
in a trunk in the Arizona summer
. . .to still wonder what you think of me

In My Opinion

Teri Danai Vrakas

English is silly
Grammar is yuckie
Writing is boring
Bibliographies are suckie
Rules for comma,
Rules for a dot.
Rules for empty space . . . ?

Rules I'd rather not
Follow or swallow or care
Just swear (damn it!)
And curse their very names
And all of their children through the years

Should be cursed and die a bloody death
hot with flames.
Give me a pen and a page
and I'll rampage and rage
Without reason or rhyme
Or word-processing time
And I will be happy
And sane.
!English Is So Inhumane!

Daylight's Dance

Samantha A. Wardynski

Daylight
drips
down
the
blue slate sky
the sun
melts away the night
Leaving dew's
damp
reminder
of the element of
sky.

Spontaneous Combustion

Samantha A. Wardynski

Out of nowhere

Boom!

Violent punches

Clenched teeth

Tears stream down

Red-face the pain from mind

Draining to fists

Unable to stop

Until finally exhausted

She sits and stares

Unsure

PROCESSES

Bill Yarrow
Faculty

How to Boil Water

Get a pot.
Hold under tap.
Fill with water.
Place on stove.
Turn on flame.
When tiny bubbles appear
and grow wild
Voila!
It is done.

How to Boil Eggs

Read my poem "How to Boil Water."
Drop an egg in it.

How to Eat

Press your food
into the hole
just below
your nose.

How to Think

Pick one thing,
one thing that you know.
Pick this one thing that you know
and pick
and pick
and pick
and keep picking at it
until the scab falls off.

How to Love

Sweep into one corner
all your ego.
Set a match to it.

How to Die

Watch those who live in your neighborhood.
Watch them closely.
Copy what they cease to do.

W.

Bill Yarrow
Faculty

I like the bite,
the spice, its
criminal
tang.
I like to feel
the flavor
of its
intent,
to bask
against
its face.

I like
the snap
of it
between
my teeth
and tongue,
the smash
of its
darkness
smeared,
and how,
upon the
walls
of my
speaking,
it melts
and goes down.

VIETNAM

Bill Yarrow
Faculty

What I remember most is how dark it was
at two in the morning and how angry the air
was at two in the morning and the sound of
sobbing in the trees at two in the morning
and how at two in the morning I had no mind.

Vietnam was not one afternoon, not one dream
after the fact, not one horror, not one fear.
It was not one humiliation, not one sorrow.
It was not one body, it was not one climate.
It was not one of anything, but a rain
of speculation and self-doubt, a shower,
over months, of distance from everything
the world had to offer you, and you had
to offer the world.

When I landed in Vietnam, I was frightened,
but not unhappy. I was apprehensive, but not
reluctant. The land took away my fear. It also
took away my greed, my haughtiness,
my intemperance. I was left with two eyes
and nothing to be. I had no ambition to be.

Vietnam is denial.
Vietnam is refusal.
Vietnam is motive.
Vietnam is complaint.
Vietnam is the volatile earth.
Vietnam is emotion out of control.
Vietnam is an angry unhappiness.
Vietnam is a concession of innocence.
Vietnam is no embrace.
Vietnam is trust withdrawn.
Vietnam is cause and effect.
Vietnam is lack of shame.
Vietnam doesn't want to be Vietnam.
Vietnam only wants to be heard.
Vietnam is abandon.
Vietnam is outrage.
Vietnam is vengeance.
Vietnam is an argument I don't have the energy to win.

Wordeater 105 Student Jury:

Jeff Adams
Nicolle Byrnside
Jeff Hicks
Nancy Lockhart
Francine Tolf

Awards

Prose ($5.00)

Alicia Matthews
Tammy Raynor
Amy Riley
Rebecca Sailor(fiction)
Rebecca Sailor (features)

Poetry ($5.00)

Crystal Duran
Susan Irvine
Matt Packard
Terry Vrakas
Samantha A. Wardynski

Cover Design ($20.00)

Michael Fletcher

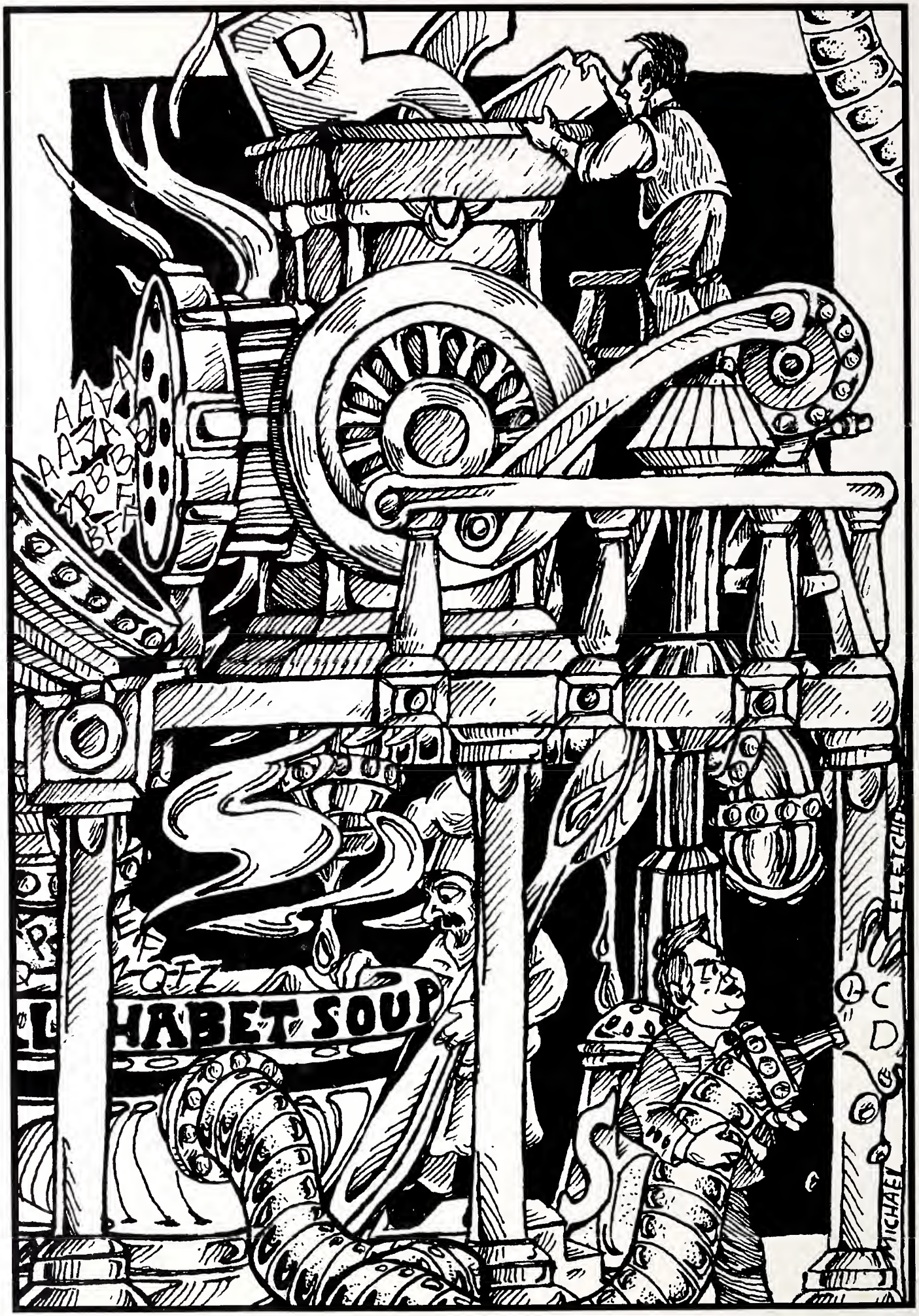
John Stobart is solely responsible for the awards.
Manuscript and cover designs must be submitted to:
John Stobart, Room C-1069

by

May 3, 1999 - Wordeater 106

Cover Designs submitted must be one inch margins all around.
Emphasize lines. Use india ink.

This issue contains selections from students, faculty, alumni and friends of Joliet Junior College. Only current students are eligible for awards. Awards are not made to "anonymous" or pen name writers. Sign each page submitted and include your student identification number.


HABET SOUP
MICHAEL FLETCHER